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RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 3248
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 000182

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STATE FOR USOAS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BL](#)

SUBJECT: OAS SYG ENDORSES EVO, PROVIDES GOB POLITICAL COVER

REF: A. LA PAZ 150

[1](#)B. 07 LA PAZ 3209

[1](#)C. LA PAZ 120

Classified By: EcoPol Chief Mike Hammer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

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Summary
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[1](#)1. (C) Following a meeting with President Evo Morales, Organization of American States (OAS) Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza publicly declared that the OAS and the community of the Americas fully back Bolivia's process of transformation, argued that there is no reason for concern with regards to Bolivian democracy (citing Morales' "tremendous efforts" at dialogue with the opposition), and argued the MAS' draft constitution did not violate democratic principals (despite the fact that it treats indigenous and non-indigenous Bolivians differently). The opposition greeted the Secretary General's comments with disappointment. Insulza's failure to meet formally with the opposition and his statements made his visit appear one-sided.

[1](#)2. (C) Ambassadors from OAS member states, including our own, pressed Insulza about his comments. The Secretary General expressed the view that the national referendum scheduled in 2008 will resolve many of Bolivia's social and political tensions. (Comment: We do not share his optimism and fear a constitutional referendum could deepen the country's east-west divide. We are, however, encouraged that the OAS appears prepared to send an election observer team, and that the team will follow the entire process. End Comment). Insulza's public statements may adversely effect the already fragile national dialogue between the Morales administration and opposition prefects. End Summary.

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Stamp of Approval?
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13. (U) OAS Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza met with President Evo Morales and Minister of the Presidency Juan Ramon Quintana January 24 for a little more than 90 minutes. Morales invited Insulza to La Paz when the two met during Cristina Fernandez' inauguration in Buenos Aires in December.

The Secretary General also met with La Paz Mayor Juan Del Granado, rather than other national figures and leaders of the opposition. A brief airport "encounter," as the local OAS representative described it, is to take place with Santa Cruz Prefect Ruben Costas the evening of January 25.

14. (U) Following his meeting with Morales, Insulza made a series of very favorable comments about Evo Morales, the Morales administration, and the actions of the ruling Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party. Insulza stated that the OAS council and the community of the Americas, "support the transformation process that Bolivia is living in, transformations that will be carried out in a democratic manner with the participation of all Bolivians."

15. (U) Insulza also remarked that he and the international community saw virtually no signs that Bolivia's democracy was at risk, stating "... there is no view abroad that Bolivian democracy is under threat." The Secretary General, without having spoken to the opposition prefects, highlighted Evo's and his government's "great efforts to reach an understanding (with the prefects) which will permit Bolivia to be more democratic and more united than ever." Regarding the MAS draft constitution, Insulza stated, "I do not see any points that threaten the basic principals of democracy . . ." The Secretary General also stated that he saw the constitution as

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in line with the OAS Democratic Charter.

16. (C) Comment: The MAS draft constitution as it currently stands appears to violate democratic principals in a number of areas. If approved, the constitution would provide indigenous Bolivians a host of rights that non-indigenous Bolivians would not enjoy. Proposed changes to the judicial system have raised concerns that the new constitution would violate fundamental civil rights. It is unclear whether Insulza was appropriately briefed on the new constitution. In a conversation with the local OAS representative on January 25, the Ambassador was told Insulza would walk back some of his statements on the constitution, but in the end it does not appear he did so. End Comment.

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Insulza and the National Electoral Court
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17. (C) Insulza held a separate meeting with new National Electoral Court (CNE) President Jose Luis Exeni. Following the meeting, Exeni announced that he had asked the OAS Secretary General for the OAS to send an election observation

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team. Insulza responded that the OAS was "disposed" to sending a mission.

18. (C) According to the local OAS representative, the OAS has been promised a needed official government request, but does not know how many people it will send to Bolivia. The local representative acknowledged the need to have observers in Bolivia sooner rather than later in order to watch over the entire process. (Comment: The Embassy will continue to encourage the OAS delegation in La Paz that any observer team must supervise the entire election process, to prevent the Bolivia government from exploiting a more superficial visit. End Comment).

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Opposition Outraged
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19. (U) The opposition rejected Insulza's comments on the state of Bolivian democracy. PODEMOS leader and former

president Jorge "Tuto" Quiroga stated, "There have been many actions against democracy by Mr. Chavez and his satellites, and the OAS has shined (stood-out) by its absence (in responding)." Quiroga called Insulza's decision to meet solely with the government officials "shameless." He also insinuated that Insulza is beholden to Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, echoing his August 2007 criticism of the OAS and Insulza's response to the Venezuelan government's closure of RCTV, which he also called shameless. Insulza refused to answer these charges.

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Local Ambassadors Meet Insulza
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¶10. (C) Following his meetings with Exeni and Morales, Insulza met with various Ambassadors from OAS member states. Our Ambassador as well the ambassadors of Paraguay, Ecuador and Mexico voiced their concerns over the statement that the new constitution was in line with the OAS Democratic Charter.

Our Ambassador commented that a constitution which enumerates rights for one group and not for others is problematic and contrary to democratic principals, explaining that government programs (not the constitution) are reasonable measures to promote more social inclusion. The Ambassador pointed to his experience during the political transition in South Africa, where the new constitution was color-blind, but laws and policies were put in place to address the legacies of apartheid.

¶11. (C) Insulza expressed the view that the various referenda scheduled for 2008 will help resolve many of Bolivia's lingering social and political issues. Ambassadors stressed Bolivia's east versus west divide is deep and that a constitutional referendum will not necessarily solve this issue, in fact it might exacerbate it. Insulza was asked whether he would meet with opposition leaders, he responded that he would only meet with government officials, this despite his earlier meetings with opposition officials in Washington.

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Comment
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¶12. (C) Many in the diplomatic community were surprised by Insulza's endorsement of Evo's program, as well as his democratic seal of approval of the MAS constitution. The Secretary General clearly had in mind a visit to boost Evo

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rather than to carve a role for the OAS in Bolivia's current situation. We are, however, encouraged that the OAS plans to take a leading role in election observations, and that the OAS understands it needs observers on the ground well before elections take place.

¶13. (C) Insulza, in numerous statements, pointed to the fact that today Bolivia is calm, unlike it was in mid-December after the MAS had pushed through its constitution and the opposition prefects announced that they would send their autonomy statutes to a vote. While the rhetoric and the potential for violence have indeed subsided since mid-December, this is in part due to the Christmas holidays and upcoming Carnaval period (first week of February). While the Morales administration and opposition prefects have entered into a "national dialogue" which is a positive step, most analysts view the prospects for a national accord with skepticism.

¶14. (C) Insulza's public statements in support of the Morales government could undermine the already fragile national dialogue. By backing Evo and passing positive judgment on the MAS draft constitution Insulza increased Morales' leverage over the opposition. The Secretary General's comments lend the Morales administration and MAS constitution credibility during a critical time when the government and opposition prefects are negotiating extremely

delicate and controversial issues)- changes to the government's plan to reduce revenues to the departments (states) as well as changes to the MAS constitution and opposition prefecture autonomy statutes. Should talks fail, Evo will point to Insulza's January 24 comments as proof that he entered the talks in good faith, has acted in accordance with the OAS Democratic Charter, and will lay the blame on opposition prefects. End Comment.
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